



**WVE**

*Women's Voices for the Earth*

Members of the Montana State Senate  
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SENATE BILL 423  
SENATE NO. 3  
DATE 2-19-07  
SEN. NO. SB 423

February 19, 2007

Dear Members of the 60<sup>th</sup> Montana State Legislature,

We, the undersigned, a diverse constituency representing the interests of women, children, health care providers, fishing outfitters, businesses and state and local agencies, wish to ask for your support of **Senate Bill 423-The Montana Mercury Safety and Protection Act**. Senate Bill SB-423 is designed to reduce mercury pollution from mercury-containing products, thereby protecting the health of Montana's children and the state's world class rivers, lakes, fish and game. Senate Bill SB 423 will:

- Phase out the sale and distribution of mercury-containing thermostats, thermometers, blood pressure gauges, barometers and other mercury-containing measuring devices that have an economically viable alternative
- Beginning in 2012, ban from landfills the disposal of the above mercury-containing products and fluorescent light bulbs (households are exempt)
- Require manufacturers to notify the state about mercury-containing products sold in MT through an interstate clearinghouse
- Require manufacturers to notify the state about mercury-containing products sold in the MT through an interstate clearinghouse
- Require manufacturers to label mercury-containing products sold in the state
- Encourage DEQ to carry out public education efforts around recycling opportunities for mercury-containing products and proper disposal

Mercury products represent more than 2,000 tons of mercury in the environment. Mercury-containing products such as thermostats, thermometers and electrical lighting account for an estimated 22-29 tons of air releases of mercury nationwide and 83 tons of solid waste releases.

SB-423 will protect children's health. Mercury is a dangerous neurotoxin that has been linked to learning disabilities and developmental delays in children. Mercury is passed from a mother to a developing child in the womb or through

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breastfeeding. It can also damage the heart, nervous system, or kidneys of adults.

Fish consumption is the main source of exposure to this potent toxin. The National Academy of Science estimates that 600,000 children are born each year in the U.S. with a risk of neurological effects from mercury because of contaminated fish eaten by their mothers. Native American populations are especially vulnerable to mercury exposure because, on average, they have higher rates of fish consumption.

SB-423 will protect our rivers, lakes, fish and game. Federal tests of fish caught in eight Montana lakes found that every fish sample tested was contaminated with mercury and that 54% contained mercury levels that exceeded the federal safe limit for women of childbearing age. In July of 2006, two bald eagles were found dead in Montana and were determined to have elevated mercury levels. In Utah, hunters are advised not to eat Goldeneye or Northern Shovelers due to the high mercury levels in these ducks.

Montana has issued a statewide fish advisory, in part, because of high levels of mercury pollution in local fish. This represents a threat not only to human health but also the state's \$300 million a year recreational fishing industry—a vital contributor to Montana's economy.

Twenty states have passed legislation to regulate mercury-containing products. Montana must continue this trend to avoid becoming a dumping ground for existing mercury-containing products on the market. We must protect Montana water bodies from mercury pollution that may impact the health benefits of consuming fish.

Montana has the opportunity to join a growing list of states that have made women and children's health a top priority. As members of the Montana State Legislature, you have been called upon to support Senate Bill 423-The Montana Mercury Safety and Protection Act. The passage of Senate Bill 423 will lead to a reduction of mercury pollution in Montana, thereby protecting human health and the health of the state's water bodies, fish and game, and booming recreational fishing industry.

Sincerely,

We, the undersigned, endorse the content of this letter and encourage the State of Montana to pass SB 423, The Montana Mercury Safety and Protection Act. We believe this act will help protect Montana's children from the harmful effects of mercury pollution and serve to protect the state's rivers, lakes, fish and game.

1. Fishing Outfitters Association, Gallatin Gateway
2. P.E.T.E.S, Energy Services, Inc., Missoula
3. Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies-The Montana Coalition
4. Sure-Way Systems, Inc., Deer Lodge
5. Montana Women Vote Coalition
6. Montana Trout Unlimited
7. Missoula City-County Health Department, Water Quality District
8. Montana River Drifters, Belgrade
9. Cheryl M. Reichert, M.D, PhD (Biochemistry), Pathologist, Great Falls
10. Dr. Andrij Holian, PhD, Director, University of Montana Center for Environmental Health Sciences, Missoula
11. Wade G. Hill, PhD, RN, Montana State University, Bozeman
12. Blackfoot River Drifters, Missoula
13. Dr. Doug Coffin, PhD, University of Montana Center for Environmental Health Sciences, Missoula
14. Lewis and Clark Expeditions, Helena